

# Maria Effertz Hanson

February 19, 2002

Chairman Michael Powell  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

RE: Proceeding # 01-348

Dear Chairman Powell:

I am writing in support of the merger of Hughes and EchoStar, and its impact upon rural states like North Dakota.

I know you are already aware of the lack of broadband access in North Dakota and how this puts rural states like ours at a competitive disadvantage. We live in rural Carrington, and often find it impossible to connect at a speed that would allow normal business.

In order for our citizens and small businesses to be competitive in a global economy, it is critical that we have access to broadband Internet – especially our rural communities. It isn't enough that our users and small businesses have access to the slower, dial-up Internet access method.

I am interested in this merger because how this new company, EchoStar, can provide high-speed broadband Internet access to rural areas like North Dakota. Plus, it will also provide:

- nationwide pricing (so rural residents don't pay more than urban residents) – which is critical to help protect rural consumers
- high-speed broadband Internet for virtually anyone – whether they live in a large town, small town, or on the farm
- competition against the cable industry who enjoys over 80% of the pay-TV customers

Cooperstown, North Dakota is in the process of utilizing the broadband satellite for their economic development purposes. This system will work because it will provide high-speed broadband access at an affordable price.

I fully support being providing rural America and North Dakota high-speed Internet access. This is our opportunity to remain competitive and provide opportunities for rural.

Sincerely,

*Maria Effertz Hanson*

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